

Institutional Effectiveness

2021-2022

Program: History BS/BA

College and Department: College of Arts & Sciences – Department of History

Contact: Jeff Roberts

Mission: The Department of History offers a wide array of courses to diverse student populations. The department provides General Education instruction to a large number of students in the state-required American history sequence, while Western and World Civilization sequences satisfy TBR humanities requirements. In addition, department faculty offer numerous specialized courses that attract majors and non-majors alike.

The department has developed and maintains a comprehensive and successful curriculum for history majors. The programs are designed to provide future historians with the tools and knowledge for successful graduate study in the discipline, and to prepare graduates for careers in education, law, public service or business. Majors are expected to think analytically, ascertain facts and make objective judgments, and write clearly, communicating the results of reasoned analysis.

The department shares with the University both its broader commitment to cross-cultural understanding and its special obligation to serve the Upper Cumberland region of Tennessee.

Student Learning Outcomes:

SLO 1: Students will demonstrate the ability to research and write a scholarly paper of professional quality.

SLO 2: The department desires to instill in students an appreciation of the past, to include a desire to explore history beyond the classroom.

SLO 3: History majors will demonstrate a reasonable command of general factual knowledge.

A departmentally developed curriculum map can be found in Appendix 1 that shows the connections between courses and student learning outcomes.

Assessment Methods:

SLO 1: Ability to research

1. Historical Methods and Senior Seminar Courses

Students capstone projects, completed in History 4900, are evaluated using a faculty developed rubric. The rubric includes the following criteria:

- a. Formulate an original thesis and defend it in a sustained argument
- b. Make effective use of primary sources (if possible) - AND/OR - Demonstrate an ability to professionally evaluate and employ secondary sources.
- c. Make proper use of citation conventions, thereby avoiding plagiarism.

- d. Use standard written English effectively and appropriately.
- e. Present a well-organized paper.
- f. Place the research topic and/or literature survey in broader historical context.
- g. Demonstrate critical thinking, reasoned analysis, and/or problem solving.
- h. Follow any additional directions as assigned by the professor.

SLO 2: Extracurricular activities

1. Student Participation in Co-curricular Activities

Tracking spreadsheet for the number of students who attend each co-curricular activity.

SLO 3: General factual knowledge

1. ACAT

The ACAT is an exit exam for students majoring in history. The ACAT includes four content areas including: U.S. 1820 to 1890, U.S. Colonial to 1763, U.S. Military/Diplomatic, and U.S. 1763 to 1820. Exam is administered in the senior seminar course.

2. Senior Exit Interview

The chairperson invites all graduating seniors to a one-on-one interview in the weeks prior to their graduation. The chair asks the seniors to review the program. He seeks information on successful classes and asks about areas in need of improvement. The results can provide useful information for all three SLOs, as well as general program development.

Results:

SLO 1: Ability to research

The History Department faculty recognized recently that they possessed no way to chart collectively the success of the history majors taking History 499X, the senior capstone course, in particular the strengths and weaknesses of their papers. The department has since developed a rubric that documents the ability of all students in the course each term to research and write a scholarly paper of professional quality. The rubric allows the department, at a quick glance, to gauge successes and to identify areas needing improvement as well as to document the percentage of students who earned a "C" grade or higher (a recent addition to SLO 1). The chair then shares this information with the entire faculty who discuss the results in periodic departmental meetings.

Fall 2021

Dr. Dollar taught the Senior Seminar (History 4997) in the fall of 2021 that included nine seniors. The scope of the course was America, 1789-1836. The class met in weekly sessions, during which Dr. Dollar guided and advised the students in their research and writing. The class yielded several good papers, two of which were outstanding. Those two papers earned an "A." Three students made a "B," two made a "C," one made a "D," and one an "F." Two of the papers that received a "B" earned a very high "B." One of those was submitted late and incurred a penalty which brought down the grade. Had it been

turned in on time, it too, would have been an “A” paper. Two other students made a “B.” Both suffered from numerous stylistic and grammatical errors as well as incorrectly formatted citations. The two papers that received a “C” lacked content, contained numerous stylistic and grammatical errors, had incorrectly formatted citations. The “D” paper suffered the same problems as the “C” papers, but it was submitted late and incurred a penalty. Otherwise, it would have earned a “C.” The student who made the “F” simply did not turn in a paper—the major requirement of the course. The rubric below corresponds to the eight students who submitted a paper. Seven of the eight who turned in papers scored “C” or higher.

Rubric Results for Fall 2021

	Excellent	Good	Emerging	Weak	Grades
Thesis	50%	37.5%	0%	12.5%	A--2
Argument	50%	37.5%	0%	12.5%	B--3
Primary	37.5%	37.5%	25%	0%	C--2
Secondary	25%	75%	0%	0%	D--1
Citations	12.5%	50%	12.5%	25%	F--1 (no paper)
English	12.5%	50%	37.5%	0%	C or higher—87.5%
Organization	50%	25%	25%	0%	
Context	37.5%	37.5%	25%	0%	
Critical	25%	37.5%	37.5%	0%	
Direction	25%	50%	25%	0%	

Spring 2022

Dr. Troy Smith taught the senior seminar (History 4998) in Spring 2022, with eleven majors. The topic was Afro-Native America, and class was held once weekly for three hours. There were seven books assigned; students had to write reaction papers on five of the seven texts, and lead discussion for one text. Near the end of the semester, each student also had to do an informal presentation in which they described for their peers their thesis and progress so far on the final research paper and were given peer feedback. The research paper topic could be anything, subject to instructor approval, related to African America or Native American history.

Final research papers were graded according to a rubric detailed below, with each category receiving equal weight. This is not Dr. Smith’s normal method for grading papers and led to some disparities. Ordinarily, Dr. Smith would give a paper with mediocre language skills a mediocre grade, no matter how well the student did in other categories. Because he had committed to weighting them all equally, several papers that would normally have received a “B” wound up with an “A.” Similarly, one student with a weak thesis and a weak argument still made an “A” (barely) due to excelling in other areas. The end result was 9 “A’s” and 2 “B’s.” Under ordinary circumstances, at least three of those “A’s” would have been “B’s” and one of the “B’s” a “C.” Dr. Smith indicated that if he were to use a rubric like this again in the future, he would now have the experiential knowledge to weight some categories much heavier than others. All eleven students (100 percent) scored well above a “C.”

Rubric Results for Spring 2022

	Excellent	Good	Emerging	Weak	Grades
Thesis	91%	0%	0%	9%	A--9
Argument	73%	18%	0%	9%	B--2
Primary	91%	9%	0%	0%	C or higher— 100%
Secondary	82%	0%	0%	18%	
Citations	73%	27%	0%	0%	
English	73%	27%	0%	0%	
Organization	100%	0%	0%	0%	
Context	91%	9%	0%	0%	
Critical	91%	9%	0%	0%	
Direction	91%	9%	0%	0%	

There are other individual examples of student success with regard to SLO 1. A very promising senior history major traveled to Texas A&M to participate in a graduate and undergraduate history conference. The student presented a research paper completed in an upper-division history course and won *first prize* in the undergraduate category! Dr. Allen Driggers and Ms. Laura Smith of the History Department worked with sophomore history major on a Creative Inquiry Summer Experience (CISE) grant in the summer of 2022. The student spent the summer researching Civil War vaccination efforts by examining nineteenth-century newspapers and medical periodicals. The student attained research experience and will be the third author of the article when Dr. Driggers and Ms. Smith publish their findings in a medical journal this fall. Such experience and achievement will aid the student in applying to graduate school to pursue an advanced degree in history. Also, two other history majors won first prize in history at the 2021 Research and Creative Inquiry Day for research they had conducted in one of their history courses.

SLO2. Extracurricular activities

The history faculty recognized that one area of improvement needed with regard to extra-curricular activities was not only to schedule more events but also to track student attendance. In the past, the history faculty had never formally tracked attendance. Beginning in the fall of 2021, after Covid-19 began to recede, the History Department began to schedule more extra-curricular activities and also developed a tracking chart for each event.

Fall 2021

With the worst of Covid-19 over, the History Department's History Club and Phi Alpha Theta (PAT) (a history honor society), began holding extra-curricular co-activities in the fall of 2021. The faculty sponsors are Ms. Laura Smith and Dr. Allen Driggers, respectively. On September 22nd, both clubs held an introductory meeting during which the students elected officers and planned fall events. The first activity took place on October 16th when students (driving separately), drove to Knoxville and toured a replica of Christopher Columbus's ship, the *Pinta*. This was followed by a "History Fact or Fiction in the Media" game night on November 7th in Henderson Hall 114. The event was very successful, with

numerous students participating. They enjoyed food, fun, and interacting with the several history faculty who attended. The fall events concluded with an end of the semester party on December 8th, also in Henderson. The attendance at these events is below and is broken down by history majors and non-history majors.

Collective Co-Curricular Activity Attendance Results for History Club/PAT Fall

2021

Activity	History Majors	Total Students
Sept. 22, 2021--History Club/PAT Welcome/Introductory Meeting	10	18
Oct. 16, 2021--History Club/PAT Field trip to Knoxville	3	10
Nov. 7, 2021--History Club/PAT Game Night	5	15
Dec. 8, 2021--History Club/PAT End of Semester Party	10	20
Total	28	63

Spring 2022

The History Club and Phi Alpha Theta’s co-activities continued during the spring term. After an introductory meeting on February 8th, the groups held several events, including two more “History Fact or Fiction in the Media” game nights (February 25th and April 24th); a history game night on April 3rd; and a Phi Alpha Theta Lyceum on April 22nd. The lyceum is an event where students are invited to present research papers they have written in their history courses. The event mimics a professional history conference and provides students with a unique forum in which to present their best work and to field questions from the attendees, including faculty. It is truly a beneficial experience to our majors, and monetary prizes are awarded for best paper and best presentation. Numerous history majors and faculty attended.

Collective Co-Curricular Activity Attendance Results for History Club/PAT Spring

2022

Activity	History Majors	Total Students
Feb. 8, 2022—History Club/PAT Welcome/Introductory Meeting	7	25
Feb. 25, 2022—History Club/PAT Game Night	7	20
April 3, 2022—History Club/PAT Game Night	7	21
April 22, 2022—PAT Lyceum	12	25
April 24, 2022—History Club/PAT End of Semester Party	7	19
Total	40	110

The number of students who participated in the above activities greatly increased from fall to spring. These events are also opportunities to win some new history majors. Ms. Laura Smith indicated that she has knew of at least three students who switched their majors to history as a direct result of these activities.

Other activities included faculty-led field trips. Dr. Ed Beason, who taught History 4420 Public History, took two students (the entire class), on two field trips during the spring term. One was to Nashville to visit the State Library and Archives and the State Museum on February 22, 2022, where the students were able to view firsthand a state-of-the-art museum and archives. Both of these buildings were completed recently. The second field trip was to Franklin, Tennessee, on April 22, 2022. The students visited the Carnton Plantation, the Carter House, and Rippavilla, three historic sites associated with the American Civil War. In particular interest to the students were the signage and displays, which are a significant aspect of public history.

In general, most history professors remain wary of student field trips during this time.

Another co-curricular activity was in Prof. Sam Schiller's History 4903 Supreme Court: Truth & Consequences. He organized a "Night with the Federal Judges" on Microsoft Teams for December 7, 2021, during which students could network and seek advice on attending law school, and the legal profession as a whole, from two sitting federal judges. Twenty students took advantage of this opportunity.

The History Department also sponsors two endowed lectures: the Womack and the Winchester. The Womack Lecture went forward in the fall of 2021 and in person. On November 10th, author Ben Montgomery delivered a talk entitled "A Shot in the Moonlight: Seeking Justice in the South." Several students attended the event as well as faculty and members of the community. The annual Winchester Lecture was held on April 12, 2022, with Dr. Louis Woods of Middle Tennessee State University delivering a presentation entitled "Structural Barriers to Fair Housing: Nashville's Segregated Housing Market, 1910-1950." The event was well attended by students, history majors, faculty, and members of the community. In addition to these two lectures, the College of Arts and Sciences sponsored the Annual Stonecipher Lecture, which featured a presentation by Dr. Vernon Burton, a historian from Clemson University, whose topic was "Digital Humanity: The Future is Now." Dr. Troy Smith, a member of the history faculty, was indispensable in planning the event. The nature of the topic attracted numerous history majors, other students, and faculty. At this time, the History Department does not track the attendance of history majors at these lectures but will do so starting in the fall of 2022.

SLO3. General factual knowledge

The ACAT examination is a standardized test that measures students' general knowledge in four content areas of American history. The examination is administered in the senior seminar course when students have completed nearly all of their coursework.

Fall 2021

The overall ACAT scores in the fall of 2021 were pretty good and quite a bit higher than in the spring of 2021. The group standard score was 546 and the nine students as a group scored in the 66th percentile. On an individual basis, one student scored in the 93rd percentile, and three others scored in the low 80th

percentile. One, however, scored in the 18th percentile, which brought down the overall class average. Without the one low score, the average as a group would have been 559 and in the 69.75 percentile. Clearly this student did not give his or her best effort on the ACAT test.

Spring 2022

The overall ACAT scores in the spring of 2022 were similar to those in the fall. The group standard score was 525 and the group scored in the 60th percentile. One student scored in the 92nd percentile, while three others scored in the 80s—one 87th, one 85th, and one 81st. Again, as in the fall, one student scored very low and ranked in the 9th percentile. If the lowest score is removed, then the group average rises to 543 and the group percentile to 63.6.

ACAT Results

	Fall 2018 N=6	Spring 2019 N=11	Fall 2019 N=10	Spring 2020 N=15	Spring 2021* N=2	Fall 2021 N=9	Spring 2022 N=11							
Area	Std 'ile Score	Std 'ile Score	% Score	Std 'ile Score	% Score	Std 'ile Score	% Score							
US 1820 to 1890	483 3	482 3	4	463 6	3	593 2	8	477 -	6	541 6	6	542 6	6	
US Colonial to 1763	460 4	517 7	3	5	467 7	3	586 1	8	491 -	7	553 0	7	510 4	5
US military/Diplo matic	457 3	490 6	3	4	507 3	5	569 5	7	481 -	4	489 6	4	518 7	5
US 1763 to 1820	455 3	515 6	3	5	449 1	3	550 9	6	506 -	7	555 1	7	518 7	5
OVERALL PERFORMANC E	458 4	506 2	3	5	463 6	3	596 3	8	486 5	4	546 6	6	525 0	6

*No ACAT scores for Fall 2020 (no Senior Seminar)

Exit Interviews

The chair of the History Department conducted an exit interview with two students who graduated at the end of fall 2021 and with nine who graduated in the spring of 2022. Overall, each expressed praise for the history program, the history courses they took, and their history professors. Some of the comments included:

“enjoyed connecting with the professors”

“enjoyed the variety of courses offered”

“keep going in the direction the department is going”

“the professors care about the students”

“good to have attorneys teaching law classes”

“liked the flexibility of the program, which allows students to retake professors they liked”

“methods course is a course to establish a good foundation”

“liked program so much that I changed from social studies ed to history”

“great experience”

There were naturally a few criticisms involving specific professors for being too strict or condescending, but other students praised those same professors. There were suggestions as well. For instance, a couple of students recommended more courses on Asia, Africa, and Military History; one wanted more discussions in class; another criticized the History Department for requiring upper-division courses outside the department.

Modifications for Improvement:

Program Changes and Actions due to Results:

Academic year 2021-2022 was a much more typical year than the previous one. The History Department returned to relative normalcy and the faculty enjoyed numerous achievements. First among those successes was that the history faculty stepped forward to assist a colleague in need during the fall and spring terms. Dr. Birdwell, who was suffering from a terminal illness, found that he was unable to finish his courses in the fall and to teach his courses in the spring. Several faculty members volunteered to grade his exams and research papers in the fall, while others took over his courses entirely in the spring. Another success was that all faculty learned the techniques of online and distance learning during Covid-19, which paid some dividends during the summer of 2022, as two of the thirteen courses the History Department offered were online--a first in department history. Efforts continued in publicizing the new Race and Ethnic Studies minor with the development of a new website and new brochures to attract students. This effort also aids the University in achieving its diversity goals. The faculty approved a new course, the History of India, and the History Department contributed to the creation of a new Digital Humanities minor, which is to be housed in the History Department. Other highlights include the achievements in SLO 1, SLO 2, and SLO 3 mentioned above.

The history faculty recognize that opportunities for improvement exist in achieving our Student Learning Outcome goals. Students in the Senior Seminar, even those who scored “A’s,” could improve in crafting effective and clear arguments, composing a compelling narrative, and formatting sources properly. Faculty continue to stress these skills and others in the Senior Seminar as well as other upper-division history courses. Faculty must also find a way to encourage all students to take the ACAT examination seriously. Scoring in the 18th and 9th percentiles is simply unacceptable for any senior history major. Faculty are considering ways to encourage more earnestness among the students. Perhaps one such way is to assign the exam some weight in calculating the course’s final grade or by excusing students from an assignment if they score high. The history faculty should build on the success

of the History Club and Phi Alpha Theta and involve history majors in more co-curricular activities, particularly field trips. The abatement of Covid-19 should facilitate this effort. The department would also like to track the number of history majors who attend the Womack and Winchester Lectures. Finally, the history faculty need to demonstrate that the students in their courses are learning. Perhaps the best way to do this is to compile the pre and post test scores for each course. An overall department goal could then be set. The chair of the History Department will be emphasizing these opportunities for improvement in the 2022-2023 academic year.

Appendices

1. History BS_BA Curriculum Map

Appendix 1: History BS_BA Curriculum Map

Basic Course #	Short Title	Factual Acumen	Research & Writing	Additional Career Readiness	Race/Gender Diversity & Citizenship	Global Awareness
1066	University Life				X	
1310	World Science	X				X
2010	Early US	X			X	
2020	Modern US	X			X	
2210	Early Western	X				X
2220	Modern Wstrn	X				X
2310	Early World	X				X
2320	Modern Wrld	X				X
3100	Tennessee	X	X		X	
3360	US Military	X	X			X
3390	Civil Rights	X	X		X	
3410	Methods		X	X		
3420	Archives		X	X		
3430	Digital History		X	X		
3550	Ancient	X	X			X
3710	Spain	X	X			X
3720	Mexico	X	X		X	X
3900	Environment	X	X			X
4010	Colonial	X	X		X	
4020	Early Republic	X	X		X	
4030	US Civil War	X	X		X	
4040	Gilded Age	X	X		X	
4050	Early 20th C	X	X		X	
4060	Postwar US	X	X		X	
4090	Pop Culture	X	X		X	X
4100	Appalachia	X	X			
4200	Old South	X	X		X	
4210	New South	X	X		X	
4230	Economic	X	X			
4250	US West	X	X		X	
4290	Science Tech	X	X			
4330	Religion	X	X			X

4350	Gender	X	X		X	
4360	US Social	X	X		X	
4380	Black Women	X	X		X	X
4390	African-Amer	X	X		X	X
4400	Film History	X	X			X
4420	Public History	X	X	X		
4440	Native Amer.	X	X		X	
4470	Sports History	X	X		X	
4520	Medieval	X	X			X
4530	Renn/Reform	X	X			X
4540	Abs/Enlightm	X	X			X
4550	French Revo	X	X			X
4560	19th C Eur	X	X			X
4565	World War I	X	X			X
4570	World War II	X	X			X
4620	Russia/USSR	X	X			X
4630	Mod France	X	X			X
4640	Mod Germany	X	X			X
4650	Early England	X	X			X
4660	Mod England	X	X			X
4680	Holocaust	X	X			X
4690	Br Cmmwlth	X	X		X	X
4710	Africa	X	X		X	X
4730	Middle East	X	X			X
4740	Japan	X	X			X
4750	China	X	X			X
4760	Vietnam	X	X			X
4790	Latin America	X	X		X	X
4800	Legal History	X	X			
4810	Sci. Cntrovrsy	X	X			
4880	Hist Medicine	X	X			
4890	Hist Nursing	X	X			
4900	Topics	X	X			
4910	Directed Stu.	X	X			
4940	Internship	X		X		
4990	SeniorSeminar	X	X			